

**PUBLIC TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF COMMITTEE BILL  
JUD 5505  
AN ACT CONCERNING FAMILY COURT PROCEEDINGS**

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I am a litigant that has been stuck in the Connecticut family court dysfunctional system for 10-years with motions to answer to still on the docket to this day. I am a fit, loving, healthy mother looking for protection and help from the family court system to see my son and reestablish a relationship with him but I am unable to find anything but further abuse driven by a cruel ex husband, aided and abetted by a GAL and her peer-in-the-business-of-law, opposing counsel, Atty. Janice Laliberte. My case name is Karl Soderlund vs Marisa Soderlund out of the Fairfield Superior Court at Main Street in Bridgeport.

I share parenting with my ex of our adorable, minor child 12-year daughter, but my son (same father), a 14-year old, smart, funny and engaging minor child whom I do not see, tragically, is being raised in his father's household to not visit me, his mother, to not see me, and to barely communicate to me. I believe that this is one of the cruelest campaigns an ex-spouse can do to another human being; to raise a child and influence them so that they are kept isolated from the other parent. It is the sickest and most abusive, psychotic thing I have ever had happened to me by another human being. I have seen my 14 son for 6 hours total in two years since he was 12. My heart is broken. Loosing a child is the worst thing that can happen to a mother. When the loss of that child happens at the hands of a person you once trusted enough to marry and have children with – it is devastating. I have shed many tears over this situation, have become depressed, have had lower work performance and many other issues.

One would think that the Guardian Ad Litem on our case, Atty. Erika Wikstrom, would have the sensitivity and training to – of course – help the father simply share parenting with me – even if I had been an imperfect mother. After-all, I was in active long-term recovery from alcohol abuse when the child wanted to leave my home and never come back – taking up his father's same negative and derogatory attitudes and way of speaking and treating me; ways in which a 12-14 year old young man should NOT be being raised as it is not in his best interest to be isolated so severely from his mother. Even when I drank too much and was stressed out from a minimum-wage earning ex husband/artist constantly demanding more and more money from me to support his millionaire lifestyle and litigating constantly to extort more money from me – (he still does this as he is currently seeking full legal custody and child support – hearing on May 13th – his mother gives him lots of her newest husband's money – hence he can afford expensive litigation even though he claims he is poor), the Guardian Ad Litem should have helped the child have both parents in his life. But drinking was no longer an issue when this Guardian

even started the case. I was already sober and staying sober. She, nor any other GAL, nor any other family court appointed professional, nor my abusive ex-husband, was the “help” I received that got me sober. Just the opposite, my ex-husband and the GAL, Atty. Erika Wikstrom were actually triggers that made me feel like I wanted to drink again – often people that abuse drinking do so because they are trying to numb the pain of being abused themselves. GALS dive people to drink!

That is what I did over the cruelty of how my ex husband was treating me and what I felt like doing when the GAL was aiding and abetting his abusive ways (he pays more of her fees than I do and his attorney recommends he on other cases). She set this case up to enable the father to abuse me by teaching the child to isolate himself from me. By the way, the father happens to have more family money to pay her fees, where I don’t have that kind of money and can not afford to pay her fees she wants. That is my experience with how family law professionals work – if you pay them more – they help you more. My ex husband paid Atty. Wikstrom more, she helped him more.

Atty. Wikstrom does not have the training to have been assigned on this case with it’s complex mental health issues, of my own with substance abuse, with my ex’s with his personality disorder(s), manipulative personality and the parental alienation he has going on with one of our two children – the young man that he is very fond of and emotionally attached to in a co-dependent unhealthy way. One may say he is enmeshed with our son. This case needed a doctor who understood these complex issues, NOT a GAL who believes she is a master of these issues with a law degree. Atty. Wikstrom did tell us to use two different reunification therapists – first an LCSW, named Peggy Sue Forrester whom had very little experience with these issues and then another one named, Dr. Brien O’Callaghan who has only successfully reunified ONE CASE of one parent and child 10-years ago and hadn’t had any experience successfully reunifying a parent and child since then. To put the entire balance of my visitation and custody issues solely in the hands of these professionals who were inexperienced on my family’s issues was, in my opinion, malpractice. I had recommended to her 10-12 names of therapists whom I thought would have helped, but the GAL dissed my input as mother.

Hence, my son is going on through life without a relationship with his loving, fit, mother. The calls she made and didn’t make set this case up for disaster and the alienation of my son by his father.

Also, of great concern, which should be further investigated, is that it is evident to me that Atty. Wikstrom practices in conspiracy type tactics with the opposing counsel, Atty. Janice Laliberte. The two of them are on many different cases together. One often recommends the other, for instance if Erika Wikstrom is representing a Plaintiff or Defendant than they will recommend the other as either as GAL – and then work together to skew the cases towards their Plaintiff or Defendant whichever one has that role. They play musical chairs like this with other members of the Milford Bar as well, Atty. Christopher Goulden, and Atty. John Magor. All of them can represent a Plaintiff or Defendant AND recommend someone else from their group to be the GAL. Just sit in the courtrooms of Bridgeport at The Fairfield Superior Court and you can see the musical

chairs and the skewing of the cases going on and the further recommending of each other on cases. There are other litigants which have this same complaint or very similar against Atty. Erica Wikstrom and Atty. Janice Laliberte such as the Defendant in Tobin, Pamela vs Nunez, Jose. Hart vs Hart, Lynch vs Lynch. Other cases will come forward too, but have asked for anonymity for the time-being. I have talked to them but their cases are ongoing and they fear retaliation – as they should because this group from the Milford Bar Association does retaliate.

There is no doubt in my mind that Atty. Wikstrom is part to blame here for her malpractice on our case – so is the opposing counsel – her peer in fee, Atty. Janice Laliberte, – whom as opposing counsel, barely-to-never tries to help end the Soderlund vs Soderlund disputing. She makes a lot of money off of my ex and his ongoing litigation so why would she want it to resolve and go away. My abusive and greedy ex husband, is to blame too. Without his desire for ongoing pain and litigation and to hurt me, there would be no need for him to pay the members of the corrupt Milford Bar Association to join him in prolonging the litigation and abuse. I also blame part on myself as I was not a perfect mother and drinking too much over five years ago under all of this stress from non-stop litigation in an unhelpful court system where arguments over kids pays well and hence is facilitated to continue. But I do feel exploited.

She was no help to anyone and in fact I will always maintain that this Guardian Ad Litem being ill-trained on recognizing and identifying personality disorders such as Narcissism, Borderline, or Psychopathy that may be present in my ex-husband, and her misunderstanding of what parental alienation or parental isolation is, and her prejudice and bias against people with alcohol issues. I drink and drove with the children 5 years ago and was arrested, but not convicted of DUI. I was not convicted as I had a medical procedure the day before But I was drinking to much. That is why I have completely stopped 5 years ago. I currently enjoy long-term sobriety of 4 years and am an entirely healthy fit loving mother as our 12 year old daughter can attest to and others can witness by our loving relationship. Why with a GAL on the case, was a young boy at the age of 12 allowed to leave and never return to a mother who had, at that time – one full year of sobriety. Even with 4-years of sobriety this child is still being raised to be isolated from me. But the GAL, Atty. Erika did everything one would think a GAL should not do.

If the Committee can support Section 2 of Proposed bill 5055 removing immunity for the GAL, I believe that the culture of corruption and malpractice will be more likely to be removed from the family court over time. Without enacting this section, the culture of abuse of power by GALs and exploitation by of people with any mental health issues by GALs with no mental health training will stop.

If the committee can also support section 3 of proposed bill HB 5055 about letting the parents choose a mental health treatment or psychological evaluation provider rather than having one imposed an ordered decision through the court via the GAL or the judge that would help get rid of the appearance of corruption we have going on where the current mental health providers are being chosen on their ability to help an attorney's or GAL's position in their case and in their future billings. The obvious network, ie. Conspiracy

that some GALs have with the mental health care providers and their power over them in holding future recommendations of them or not based on their reports being able to help their position must be removed. Giving the power of choice for our mental healthcare back to the parents in family court will stop some of this corruption.

My ex husband and the GAL will maintain that the ongoing and aggressive litigation they pursued and still pursue to this day were “to help me with my drinking”. But the fact is they exacerbated any mental health issues by conducting unfair, inhumane, punishing, cruel and horrid actions against me. I wanted to drink MORE with their type of involvement. I was depressed more with their type of involvement. More stressed. I even had a heart attack – with no heart disease – just stress related. They were not helpful at all to my children and I. Just abusive in making our environment hostile and unhealthy, robbed of financial resources and just over all depleted and defeated. Crushing a mother is not good for the children.

The help I got to successfully achieve long-term sobriety over 5 years ago did not come from my ex husband, Karl Soderlund. He made the problems worse. It came from the LCSW of MY CHOICE, Clariesse Loughran of The Westport Recovery Center, Dr. Robert Gardiner, her partner also my choice, and from High Watch Recovery Center another one of my choices, and from the overwhelming support from my boyfriend Peter Van Munching. None of these mental health providers were court ordered and they are the only ones that worked. And my participation in them took place BEFORE the GAL was even on this case. She came on the case and her and my ex husband, Karl Soderlund, his attorney Janice Laliberte – exploited my mental health issues I had just conquered at that time punishing me still over five years later by alienating my 14 year old son from me and continuing to raise him, court and GAL aided, to be further isolated from me.

All of the mental health care providers that the GAL choose, Dr. Will Mayer, LCSW, Peggy Sue Forrester and worst of all, Dr. Brien O’Callaghan, did far more harm than good because they did not understand or were not trained on this families specific complex issues. None of these GAL forced mental health providers provided any beneficial service at all – just further isolation of the child from the mother and further enabling of the father’s abuse and strong-hold on the minor child. No one tied any of the mental health care providers, i.e. reunification therapists I was trying to recommend and my list was very long. Not one of them was called. GAL ignored my list. It’s been and still is hell that the wrong mental health providers were forced to be used here.

If you, the committee, can also support section 3 of proposed bill HB 5505 that would ensure that GALs that abuse their power will no longer get on a stand submitting hearsay testimony about what they believe a therapist or treatment provider told them skewing the case towards how they would like it to spin.

I had filed a grievance against GAL, Erika Wikstrom and within weeks she was up on the stand padding my case with hearsay of what the child’s therapists and reunification therapists had to say about the case which was different than what they had told me prior to my filing a grievance against her. All of a sudden reports she was supplying to the

courts were getting skewed to put 100% of the blame on me. This skewed reporting helped her defense of the grievance I filed against her. Banning GALs from providing testimony on behalf of mental health providers will remove the temptation for the GAL to use that opportunity to skew the testimony to suit her own personal and professional agenda over what are the right facts to report to the court.

Let's stop the psychopathic and corrupt system we have going on with the GALs. Let's stop the abuse of power from GALs and the mental health care community by supporting the passing of this bill 5505 through to law.

Thank You,

Marisa Ringel